

Fish plant hooks expansion money Processor gets \$300,000 from state



Mail this page

Subscribe
 Click here
 to get the
 latest deliv
 er your doc

By **JOHN HARRELL**
 jharrell@courier-journal.com
 The Courier-Journal

It was a ceremony highlighted by plates laden with smoked fish and caviar, but that didn't stop fish processor Lewis Shuckman from showing some down-home enthusiasm yesterday as his company received \$300,000 from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board.

"This is all that and two bags of chips," Shuckman said as he bounded from one table to the next at the Seelbach Hilton's Oak Room restaurant, gushing over his company's products.

Shuckman's Fish Company and Smokery has been processing fish at its Louisville plant at 30th and Main streets since 1969. But the \$300,000 will enable Shuckman to expand and accommodate the state's growing aquaculture industry. That growth has come in part from tobacco burley farm diversification efforts led by the agriculture board.

The grant will finance 45 percent to 50 percent of the cost of eight pieces of processing equipment purchased domestically and from Germany and Italy. Shuckman, who said his company will pay the rest of the cost, will use the equipment to increase production of his cured and smoked seafood products. Yesterday's ceremony featured smoked paddlefish, trout and catfish, along with paddlefish caviar.

"The maximum that we can smoke per day is currently 200 pounds," he said. "Now we'll be able to do 1,200 pounds a day. Our vacuum-packing capacity will go from 4 to 25 packages a minute."

The importance of Shuckman's operation should not be understated, said Purchase Area Aquaculture



The Seelbach Hilton uses fish from Shuckman's Fish Company and Smokery.



PHOTOS BY KEITH WILLIAMS, THE COURIER-JOURNAL
 Stephen Yates, in foreground, and Phil Carter — both with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture — tried some of the fish from Shuckman's that was prepared at the Seelbach Hilton's Oak Room.

care
 Fi
 person

apart
 Fi

Cooperative marketing manager Dan Bonk. PAAC frequently sends paddlefish and catfish to Shuckman for processing.

"It's really going to be nice to have a smokery of this status in the state," Bonk said.

Shuckman has adopted a Kentucky-centric attitude toward fish processing in recent years. His partners in these efforts include Brown-Forman, the Seelbach and the state's aquafarmers.



Company president Lewis Shuckman, left, talked with Seelbach executive chef Jim Gerhardt and Dennis Boyd of Brown-Forman.

Brown-Forman's Woodford Reserve bourbon is used to cure fish at the plant, while its barrel staves are broken up and used for smoking.

"Woodford only plays a small part in the quality of his product," said Brown-Forman master distiller Lincoln Henderson. "His perseverance, his optimism, his energy and his wife, Vicki, have really done it."

Seelbach executive chef James Gerhardt, who prepared the food for yesterday's ceremony, adopted a Kentucky Fine Dining program when he joined the restaurant seven years ago. He said Shuckman has been a significant asset.

"That's been one of the toughest things in the state, finding operators who can buy produce from the farms and turn it into other products and introduce them into the marketplace," Gerhardt said. "Lewis has always been a great resource."

The growth in Kentucky's aquaculture industry has sparked Shuckman's expansion efforts. PAAC, for example, has grown to 41 employees from 10 in the past year and plans to raise 3 million pounds of fish this year. Shuckman is busy making deals with Kentucky aquafarmers, purchasing their fish before they hatch. He said he pays the going market rate for live catfish, \$3.75 to \$4 per pound.

Efforts such as Shuckman's create a cyclical pattern, according to John-Mark Hack, executive director of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. The growth in aquaculture encourages processors like Shuckman's to expand, Hack explained, and that expansion further inspires tobacco farmers to diversify into aquaculture.

"Our No. 1 priority is new-market creation," Hack said. "Lewis' processing facility is helping create a new niche that a number of tobacco farm ers can venture into. This project gives our farmers an opportunity to increase their income through value-added processing."

The Shuckman's ceremony came a day before today's opening of the Aquaculture America 2003 conference at Kentucky International Convention Center. About 1,500 people are expected to attend the four-day event, which will include discussions on the basics of aquaculture, the variety of available programs and the industry's future.

For Shuckman, the future is happening over the next two years, when the expansion of his facility and expected growth in Kentucky's aquaculture market will create additional retailing

possibilities for his company and farm partners. He recently agreed to supply his products to upscale food and accessories retailer Dean & DeLuca.

"This is going to be a huge opportunity for the people of Kentucky," he said. "In Kentucky, we have more free-running springs than anywhere else in the world. That lends itself to aquaculture."

[^^ Back to top](#)

[Home](#) · [News](#) · [Sports](#) · [Business](#) · [Features](#) · [Louisville Scene](#) · [Classifieds](#) · [Jobs](#) · [Cars](#) · [Homes](#) · [Marketplace](#) · [Contact Us](#)

A green search bar for apartments.com. On the left, the text "I want in" is written in a cursive font. To the right of this text are two dropdown menus: the first is labeled "Two bedroom" and the second is labeled "-Select area-". To the right of the second dropdown menu is a "Go" button. On the far right of the bar is the apartments.com logo, which includes a green house icon and the text "apartments.com" and "You want what you want." data-bbox="268 270 838 327"/>

I want in apartments.com™
You want what you want.

Copyright 2002 The Courier-Journal.
Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/18/2002).
Send questions and comments to [The Webmaster](#).